

Message Text

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TO ALL OECD CAPITALS

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TAGS:SENV, OECD

SUBJECT: US PROPOSAL FOR AN OECD AD HOC GROUP ON
URBAN CONCERNS

1. SUMMARY. LAST YEAR THE U.S. PROPOSED THAT THE OECD
ESTABLISH A HIGH-LEVEL AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON URBAN
CONCERNS TO SURVEY OECD AND MEMBER GOVERNMENTS' ACTIVITIES
IN THIS AREA AND TO FORMULATE AN ACTION PROGRAM TO DEAL
ON AN INTEGRATED BASIS WITH THE SERIOUS PHYSICAL, SOCIAL,
ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS OF URBAN AREAS. WE
SEEK OECD MEMBER GOVERNMENTS' POSITIVE SUPPORT FOR THE U.S.
PROPOSAL, WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE CONSIDERED BY THE OECD
COUNCIL IN MID-MAY. EMBASSIES IN ALL OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES
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SHOULD MAKE APPROPRIATE REPRESENTATIONS TO BOTH FOREIGN
AND CONCERNED TECHNICAL MINISTRY AND REPORT REACTIONS TO
THE DEPARTMENT AND USOECD PARIS BY MAY 5. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE JUNE 1977 OECD MINISTERIAL, SECRETARY VANCE
PROPOSED THAT THE OECD ESTABLISH AN AD HOC WORKING GROUP
ON URBAN CONCERNS. THE U.S. PROPOSAL WAS DISCUSSED

INFORMALLY AT THE NOVEMBER 14-16 MEETING OF THE OECD URBAN ENVIRONMENT GROUP OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BY TILA DE HANCOCK OF HUD'S OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND RICHARD BROWN, U.S. REPRESENTATIVE TO THE GROUP. AT

THAT TIME REPRESENTATIVES OF MOST OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES PRESENT INDICATED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. PROPOSAL. USOECD HAS ALSO DISCUSSED THE U.S. PROPOSAL WITH OTHER DELEGATIONS IN PARIS.

3. A USG DISCUSSION PAPER ON THE SUBJECT WAS DISTRIBUTED TO DELEGATIONS BY THE OECD SECRETARIAT ON APRIL 5 AS COUNCIL DOCUMENT C(78)50. THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD HAVE ARRIVED IN CAPITALS BY NOW. WE PLAN TO ASK THE OECD COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE U.S. PROPOSAL IN MID-MAY.

4. WE HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE THAT POSITIVE INTEREST EXISTS IN AUSTRALIA, AUSTRIA, CANADA, DENMARK, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, JAPAN, THE NETHERLANDS, NEW ZEALAND, PORTUGAL, SPAIN, SWEDEN, TURKEY AND THE UK. THERE WOULD APPEAR TO BE POSSIBLE PROBLEMS WITH RESPECT TO SWITZERLAND, WHOSE REPRESENTATIVE AGREED WITH MUCH OF WHAT WAS SAID IN SUPPORT OF THE U.S. PROPOSAL AT THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT GROUP MEETING, BUT QUESTIONED IF THE PROPOSED WORK COULD NOT BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE. THERE MAY BE INTERAGENCY JURISDICTIONAL PROBLEMS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN FRANCE AND GERMANY. IN FRANCE THE PROBLEM WOULD APPEAR TO BE BETWEEN THE MINISTRE D'EQUIPMENT, WHICH CAN BE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT THE PROPOSAL, AND THE MINISTRE D'ENVIRONNEMENT AT DE LA VIE. IN GERMANY, WE UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM IS BETWEEN THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING AND URBAN AFFAIRS AND THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (TO WHICH THE FORMER USED TO BELONG).

5. THE U.S. PROPOSAL IS A REFLECTION OF THE ADMINISTRATION'S STRONG VIEWS, EXPRESSED IN THE PRESIDENT'S RECENT URBAN POLICY MESSAGE, THAT OUR COUNTRY'S WELFARE IS INTIMATELY CONNECTED WITH, IF NOT DEPENDENT ON, THE WELL-BEING OF ITS URBAN AREAS. IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO THIS U.S. INITIATIVE, EMBASSIES IN ALL OECD MEMBER COUNTRIES SHOULD APPROACH APPROPRIATE HOST GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS IN BOTH FOREIGN AND APPROPRIATE TECHNICAL MINISTRY TO SEEK SUPPORT FOR THE U.S. PROPOSAL. EMBASSIES SHOULD REFER TO US PAPER AND MAY DRAW UPON FOLLOWING POINTS:

-- URBAN AREAS REPRESENT AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT COMPLEX OF INTERRELATED PROBLEMS (ALL OF WHICH HAVE SERIOUS ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS), INCLUDING LAND USE

PLANNING, PUBLIC SERVICES, URBAN DESIGN, TRANSPORTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS, SOCIAL AND WELFARE POLICIES, TAX AND TRADE POLICIES, ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES, AND EMPLOYMENT.

-- POSITIVE EFFORTS TO SOLVE THESE VARIED PROBLEMS CLEARLY REQUIRE A MORE SYSTEMATIC EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE BETWEEN OECD MEMBERS AND A GREATER RECOGNITION OF THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THE SERIOUS PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT URBAN AREAS. WORK DONE TO DATE IN THE OECD AND BY MOST MEMBER GOVERNMENTS HAS TENDED TO FOCUS ON INDIVIDUAL SECTORS, WHILE THEIR INTERRELATION AND SIGNIFICANCE AS COMPONENT ELEMENTS OF THE URBAN SYSTEM HAS RECEIVED INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION.

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-- ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON URBAN CONCERNS, RESPONSIBLE TO THE COUNCIL, WILL PERMIT THE APPLICATION OF A CONSTRUCTIVE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO SURVEYING OECD AND MEMBER GOVERNMENTS' ACTIVITIES IN THIS AREA AND TO THE FORMULATION OF AN ACTION PROGRAM THAT CAN BE EXPECTED TO BENEFIT ALL.

6. WE CAN EXPECT SEVERAL MEMBER GOVERNMENTS TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE U.S. PROPOSAL ON THE OECD BUDGET. EMBASSIES MAY DRAW UPON THE FOLLOWING POINTS, IF NECESSARY, IN RESPONSE TO SUCH CONCERNS:

- THE OECD BUDGET FOR 1978 ALREADY PROVIDES FOR MODEST BUT SUFFICIENT RESOURCES TO SUPPORT AN AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON URBAN CONCERNS, SHOULD THE U.S. PROPOSAL, AS WE HOPE, BE ACCEPTED BY THE COUNCIL.

-- ANY ACTION PROGRAM WHICH THE AD HOC WORKING GROUP ON URBAN CONCERNS MIGHT PROPOSE -- WE EXPECT THE GROUP'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO BE PRESENTED TO THE 1979 MINISTERIAL -- WOULD BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW AND APPROVAL BY ALL MEMBER GOVERNMENTS, AS WOULD THE CONCOMITANT QUESTION OF HOW SUCH A PROGRAM MIGHT BE FUNDED.

7. EMBASSIES SHOULD REPORT TELEGRAPHICALLY TO THE DEPARTMENT AND USOECD PARIS NOT LATER THAN MAY 5 ON THE RESULTS OF THEIR REPRESENTATIONS.

8. UNLESS REACTIONS FROM CAPITALS REVEAL SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION OR MISSION PERCEIVES OBJECTIONS, DURING SECOND WEEK OF MAY USOECD SHOULD REQUEST SECRETARIAT TO PLACE URBAN CONCERNS ITEM ON COUNCIL AGENDA FOR EARLY CONSIDERATION.

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